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THE TORQUE-TUBE

THE NEWS PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS

OF THE 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB • FOUNDED 1980



Volume X • Number 8



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Volume X; Number 8

June 1992

William E. Olson, Editor • 842 Mission Hills Lane, Columbus, Ohio 43235



Miscellaneous Matter



The Club Meet in Flint was not favored with good weather, but was a success nevertheless, and good fun. The day was cool, with occasional drizzle, and I expect that prompted about half of those who had registered to stay home. We had 14 '37 and '38 Buicks, a '52 Buick, a '56 Buick, '41 and '55 Cadillacs, and a few modern vehicles. Crossroads Village in Flint offers numerous interesting and entertaining things to do and see, and we did 'em. Just one example: Ray Lawson (#16) even got a haircut in the "old-time" barbershop, for which he paid all of 25¢, and listened to a mandolin player the while. My son Peter, who was with me and who is (a) an artist, (b) fond of animals and birds, and (c) only casually interested in cars, spent a few hours sketching the farm cows, pigs, and chickens. The farm workers were impressed with this, as apparently it had never happened before. One of them, upon observing Peter's work, said, "Man, you really drew the shit out of that cow!" This was a novel compliment, if not the best one Pete had had in a while, prompting him to pass out several sketches to the farmers. I hope they are treasuring them. Pete's work may be valuable some day. After all, who was Andy Warhol at age 25?

I need hardly add that there was a good deal of peering at and into cars and talking about cars, and a little bit of beer-drinking and popcorn-eating at the hotel.

According to Marv Rhynard (#327) who was one of the organizers, "We sure had a miserable day and I still haven't gotten my car cleaned up, but nevertheless it was nice seeing the members and spouses again. I guess that is what really makes the Club interesting and makes all the work of putting on a meet worthwhile."

Right! Our thanks to Marv and Bob Jones and their wives for all that work. Marv and Bob also seem to have the highly unusual ability to conduct a Meet that makes a profit. Money taken in exceeded expenses by some \$73. Rather than refunding a small sum to each registrant, Marv gave the surplus to the Club, and it can be used for start-up money for next year's event, whatever that turns out to be.

• FOUNDED BY DAVE LEWIS IN 1980 •

Following the Meet a few of us (two '37s, two '38s, one '56, one '91 and my Chevy truck) took off to Petoskey, Michigan for a three-day tour of the northern part of Michigan's "Lower Peninsula." The weather for this was great and we had one hell of a good time. The Noggin Room of the Perry Hotel in Petoskey may never be the same. Although I was prepared to tow anybody who had trouble, there was none on the tour. I'm sorry more of you didn't come, but in truth the size of the group was about right for ease of keeping together, getting seated in restaurants, and the like. Dan and Marion McLaughlin (#466) did a great job of planning and leading the tour.

I encourage everyone to organize tours for five, or ten, or however many cars can be mustered, in your own localities. They are really fun.

At the conclusion of the tour, Pete and I took off into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, where we spent 10 days seeing all sorts of interesting things. I also collected some interesting car parts from fellow-member Curt Backer (#468), who lives a considerable distance into northern Minnesota. Visiting Curt also gave us a chance to see the source of the Mississippi, at which place the Father of Waters is about four feet wide and six inches deep. Pete and I hatched a plan to pee into it, calculate how long it would take for the pee to reach New Orleans, then go there at the appointed day and convince ourselves that we were watching our offerings pass into the Gulf of Mexico some weeks or months after they had been given. For various reasons, including the presence of women and children, the plan was not implemented, but I daresay someone or other has done it.

* * * * *

That two-week vacation is one reason this issue is late. Another is that the last one was late.

You will observe that I have labelled this issue "June" although you may well get it in July. The next I will label "July." In accordance with the historic traditions of this Club, there will be no "August," as that is one of the three months of the year I skip, the others being November and February, there being nine Torque Tube issues per annum, that being the most I can possibly produce, even with the superhuman capabilities I bring to bear on the business.

* * * * *

Until recently, I had planned to attend the BCA National Meet in Kansas this July. However, it became apparent to me around the middle of June that this has been one of the most expensive years of my life so far, and that conserving cash would be a damn good idea. (A good deal of the drain can be attributed to what I have termed the Parental Payroll.) Therefore, I have scrapped this plan. To all of you whom I might have seen in Kansas City, my apologies: maybe next year.



CLUB ROSTER

I have received several letters concerning the Roster. While as a percentage of total membership the response to my request for comment on this subject is not very great, it is perhaps big enough (about 5%) to be statistically significant. Sentiment seems to overwhelmingly be in favor of keeping the Roster, so it will be kept, at least for near term. Some members suggested that doing a Roster every other year would be enough, and might lessen the effort required to compile it. However, that would really not lessen the effort, it would only require that it be expended less often; in fact, the effort might well be greater, as there would be more changes from the last preceding Roster on a biennial basis. So, an annual Roster will continue to be included in the benefits of membership. It is my hope that by next autumn we will have in place a method for processing the basic data in a manner that overcomes the problems we have had in the past.

One of the letters I received came from Andrew Diem (#852). I reproduce this in part below, not only because it praises my efforts in elaborate terms (a "fountain of knowledge" — how about that?), but also because it is more-or-less typical of most of the responses. The photos Andy refers to also appear in this issue.

Mr. William Olson
842 Mission Hills Lane
Columbus, Ohio 43235

Dear Bill,

As a relatively new member to the Club, I want to express the great interest The Torque Tube provides in the appreciation of my old Buick. I receive a number of both professional and special interest publications each month, and The Torque Tube is at the head of my list of favorites. It is scanned first, after examining the mail for checks, before any thing else is read!

You do a most creditable job of putting together on a frequent basis, a magazine that has many features that are most beneficial. Your photographs are always inspirational to see how others enjoy their old Buicks as well a providing ideas for our Metro Chapter Buick Club tours. The feature articles are informative and often times entertaining with their personal touch. The technical articles are continually an educational source of material dealing with many little "questions" that are floating around seeking to be resolved. The classified adds have provided a source of many small, hard to locate items that I would not have had access to without The Torque Tube.

Please keep up the great work. We would all be lost without this great fountain of knowledge!

Based on your article about the Club Directory, I can not tell you how much it has helped me. It has served as the basis for my telephoning many of the members with 1937 model 40 C Buicks to compare car stories and share experiences. Several telephone rapport have been established that have given me great pleasure. The Directory has also been of great benefit to me during a recent trip to California to provide me with the address of the charming Van Kotens who were most hospitable in providing a tour of their beautiful home and a chance to see their superb Buicks. The Directory is a great asset and should be preserved even if it becomes an extra cost item to members opting for a copy. Please keep the Directory.

The enclosed photos are from two recent Metro Chapter club tours showing my pride and joy (the potential captions are on the backs). I must be an architect at heart, always seeking to use a building as a back drop!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

All memberships in this Club expire on August 31. (The reasons for this are rooted in history and will not be explained again; just accept it as a "given".) If your membership expires this August 31 — you can tell whether it does by looking at the address label on the envelope this issue came in, if you haven't already put it in the bottom of your garbage can and slopped coffee grounds on top of it — you will receive a Renewal Notice in August.

DO NOT — REPEAT NOT — SEND ME MONEY BEFORE YOU RECEIVE THE RENEWAL NOTICE.

Every year people do that, apparently worried that their memberships will lapse, but it only makes my job more difficult. Moreover, I have not yet decided what the dues will be for the period September 1992 - August 1993. So, please cooperate.

"PETE" PETERSON

Harold R. ("Pete") Peterson of Alma, Michigan died recently of cancer. A founding member (#12) of the Club, Pete was an engaging fellow, and the news of his passing was sad indeed. For a number of years, Pete worked on a '37 Century coupe, which he made literally out of parts cars, and which ultimately became a fine restoration. Several years ago, with frame, engine, running gear, and some of the body completed, Pete decided he could wait no longer to try things out, and set off down a country road, perched on a makeshift seat. Yes, friends, he fell off! The Buick went off into a field, where it stalled in the weeds. Fortunately there was no damage to either Pete or the car. I could never see him without thinking of that story (See Vol. II, No. 8; July 1984), and although those who knew Pete will have many good memories of him, perhaps that one is as good as any.

NEW MEMBERS

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Gresham, OR 97080
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Chesapeake, VA 23323

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'37 40

Mike Stevens #958
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Springfield, OH 45505
513/323-7864
'37 41



COVER CARS



1 · Dan Murtz



By Dan Murtz (#835)

When I last sent in my membership information, I listed as my interests old cars, airplanes, guns, and miscellaneous other "neat stuff." The pictures combine two of these interests.

I bought my '38 Special about four years ago from an ad in Hemmings, sight unseen except for a half dozen pictures. I was looking for a good clean driver, and that is what I got. Maybe I was lucky.

The pictures were taken last summer at the 94th Aero Squadron restaurant about 25 miles north of Chicago. From what I understand, the man that owns the restaurant also owns the B-17. From the "nose art" on the plane, I assume it was used in the film "Memphis Belle."

The day I took the Buick out to make the pictures, the temperature was about 87 degrees. If you think a '38 Buick is hot in July, you should tour a B-17 that's been baking in the sun!

Besides its lack of running board moldings, the car has another defect that sharp-eyed readers might spot from the photos. (There are a few details I haven't gotten around to.) Can you find it?

I have shown The Torque Tube to a number of my friends who are in different car clubs, and every one of them can't say enough about the quality of information that our Club puts out. The members should realize how fortunate they are to have a publication like The Torque Tube: nothing I've seen comes close!



EDITOR'S NOTE: Did you spot Dan's "defect"? The bumpers are on upside-down. Needless to say, I am grateful for his kind words, and hope that the rest of you share his opinions. (If you do, it would not, of course, hurt to say so.) Those of us who have reached the Age of Mellowness will remember that the B-17 was the premier American heavy bomber during most of World War II. Its heavy defensive armament (as many as 12 50-caliber machine guns in the later versions), and its ability to sustain almost incredible battle damage and yet return to base, earned it the name "Flying Fortress," and it was perhaps the greatest product the Boeing Company has ever turned out.



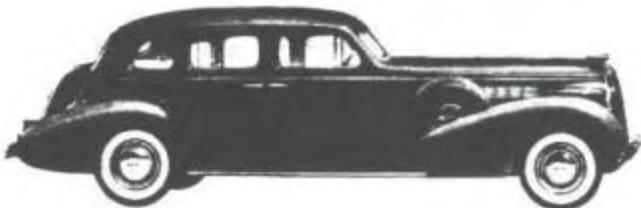
2·David Honer



DAVID HONER'S 1937 81-F

Here we see a nice-looking 1937 Roadmaster formal sedan (model 81-F) owned by David Honer (#755) of Richland Center, Wisconsin. As most of you know, the "formal" sedan differs from the "regular" or "touring" sedan in having a roll-up glass division panel between the front and rear compartments. Thus the car, intended for a family of some means which did not have a full-time chauffeur, could be driven by its owner as a "family" car (glass down), or on more stately occasions by a servant (glass up). The rear three-quarter view illustrates the marked difference between the '37 large cars and the same models for 1938, as well as the '37 40 and 60 series cars. Aft of the cowl, the '37 Roadmaster or Limited is almost pure 1936 Buick — or '37 or '36 Cadillac and La Salle.





POLICE BUICKS

Bill Mack (#839) reports that he purchased a new book, Police Cars by Monty McCord, and found several Buicks pictured therein. (The book is available from various auto literature dealers.) Among others, it shows a '37 and '38 operated by the Texas Department of Public Safety with then-Texas Ranger commander Col. Homer Garrison, and a '38 Century in California Highway Patrol trim. Although nowhere near as popular with law-enforcement agencies as the Ford in the 1930s, Buick Centuries, as we have observed in the past, found favor with the California Highway Patrol and other state police forces. Buick offered a few special "police package" options for 40-series cars, primarily a heavy-duty generator with a smaller pulley, and the 60-series 3.9:1 rear end gears, which gave higher top speed.

The photograph on the following page, which we printed several years ago, shows '38 Special two-doors used by the City of Baltimore. Curiously, the Baltimore cars had sidemounts, which were seldom found on police cars; perhaps this was intended to provide more trunk room for radio and other equipment.





Florida Fun

THE MT. DORA SHOW: A UNIQUE ANTIQUE CAR EVENT

By Bill Gillespie (#874)

On the first weekend in April in a quaint town in Florida an annual ritual takes place. Perhaps ritual is not the correct word. It is an event that is like no other I know of. The location of this event is Mt. Dora, a quaint, rustic town about 40 miles northeast of Orlando, where there is a Pre-War Antique Car Meet. The meet begins like many others, on a Friday. Unlike a lot of other meets, all cars are parked on the grounds (literally) of "The Lakeside Inn," a hotel that if "the walls could talk" could tell us about our amazing machines. This meet has been going on for 21 years and is most enjoyable. Friday night there is a spotlight parade: cars are selected, spotlighted as they drive in front of the hotel, and histories told about them. It is a grand show. Saturday - all day - music is played from the old victrolas, a rag time band comes and plays on the porch of the hotel; and of course there are car rallys through the countryside. In the afternoon there is a vintage, 1910, 1920, 1930's fashion show. Last year, my two little girls, ages 5 and 2, were in the fashion show and they loved it. This year I was in the fashion show dressed in a 1930's chauffeur's uniform, a uniform I wear for special occasions when I drive my '39 Cadillac Limo and occasionally my '38 McLaughlin-Buick. Later on that night there is a banquet at the hotel, and this year there was an auction after the banquet to help raise funds. On Sunday, typically there is a poker run, an approximate 3.5 mile drive through the town, stopping at historic places and picking up cards. This is when the beauty of the town shows through and the winding down of the meet begins before we all break and go to the four corners of wherever. My motive for this story, besides helping the "Torque Tube" stay alive, is to generate more interest for the Mt. Dora show for those of us that have '37 and '38 Buicks. If anyone reading this would like to have more information please contact me, I'll put you on a list to be contacted.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks to Bill Gillespie for sharing an interesting adventure with us. He cuts quite a dashing figure in that chauffeur suit, doesn't he? Bill is presumably no stranger to uniforms, as he is -- I think -- our only member on active duty in the U. S. Navy.







PHOTO ALBUM

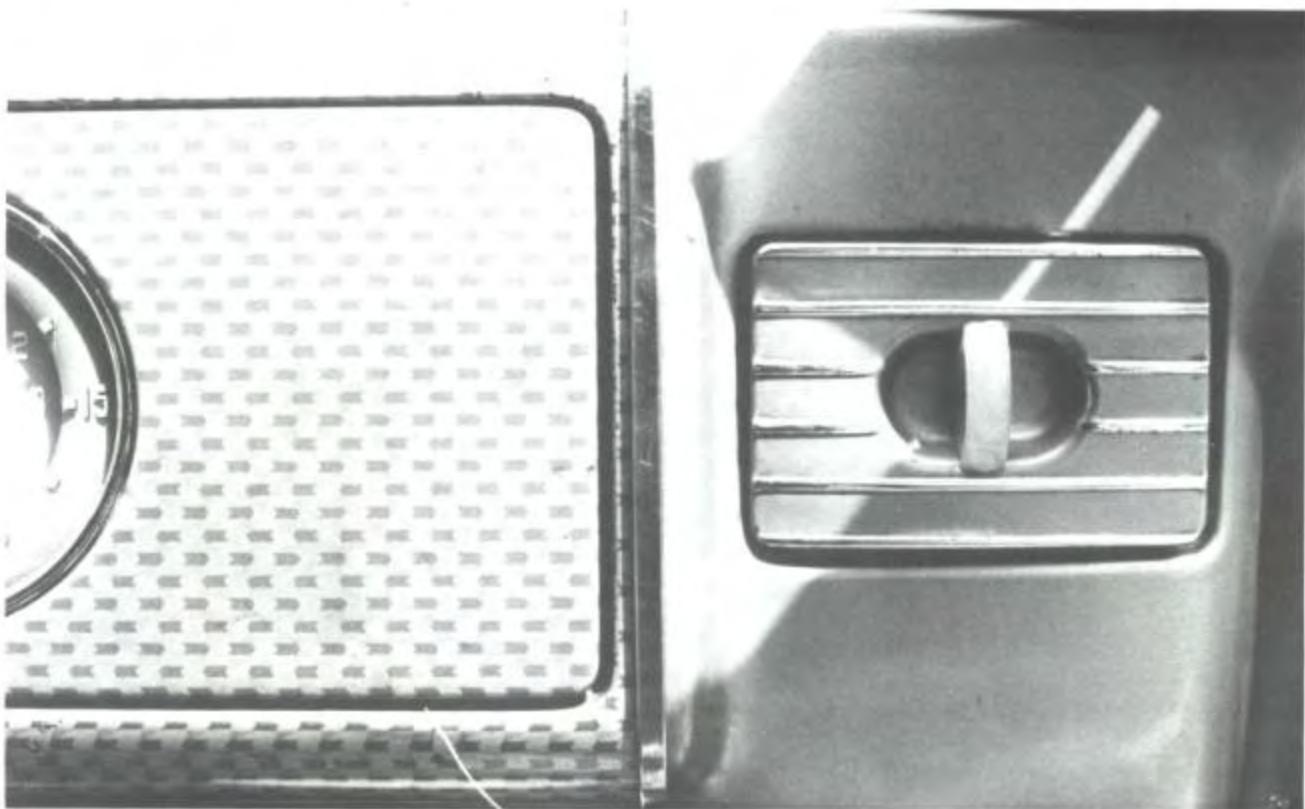


Harry Logan (#651) has been continuing his travels, and wherever he goes, he always seems to find a '38 Buick to admire. Recently, Harry went to Fort Fumble, sometimes otherwise known as Our Nation's Capital or Washington, D.C., for some sightseeing. Among the sights Harry saw were the '38 Century sedan owned by Charles Jekofsky (#524), described as "very nice and a lot of fun to drive," and a '38 Century sport coupe owned by one Bob Tullius, apparently a former race car driver who also collects World War II aircraft. (Mr. Tullius has, *inter alia*, a P-51, which is faster than the Century, although perhaps not on land.) The interior views of the Jekofsky car show two interesting features that were found on some, but not all, '38 60, 80 and 90 series cars: the maroon plastic steering wheel rim and the "chevron" pattern dash panel. The latter is perhaps the most unusual. Most '38 Centuries appear to have had a woodgrained dash; it is my belief, although there is no hard evidence, that the "chevron" dash was a feature of early '38 production which did not find favor with customers or dealers. The dash panel in Charles Jekofsky's car is in nice original condition, and shows that where the "chevron" pattern was used, the panel was painted a color very similar, or identical, to the "Lustre Light Grey" used on '37 80 and 90 series cars, and the "chevron" transfer then applied across the central portion between the two vertical trim strips.

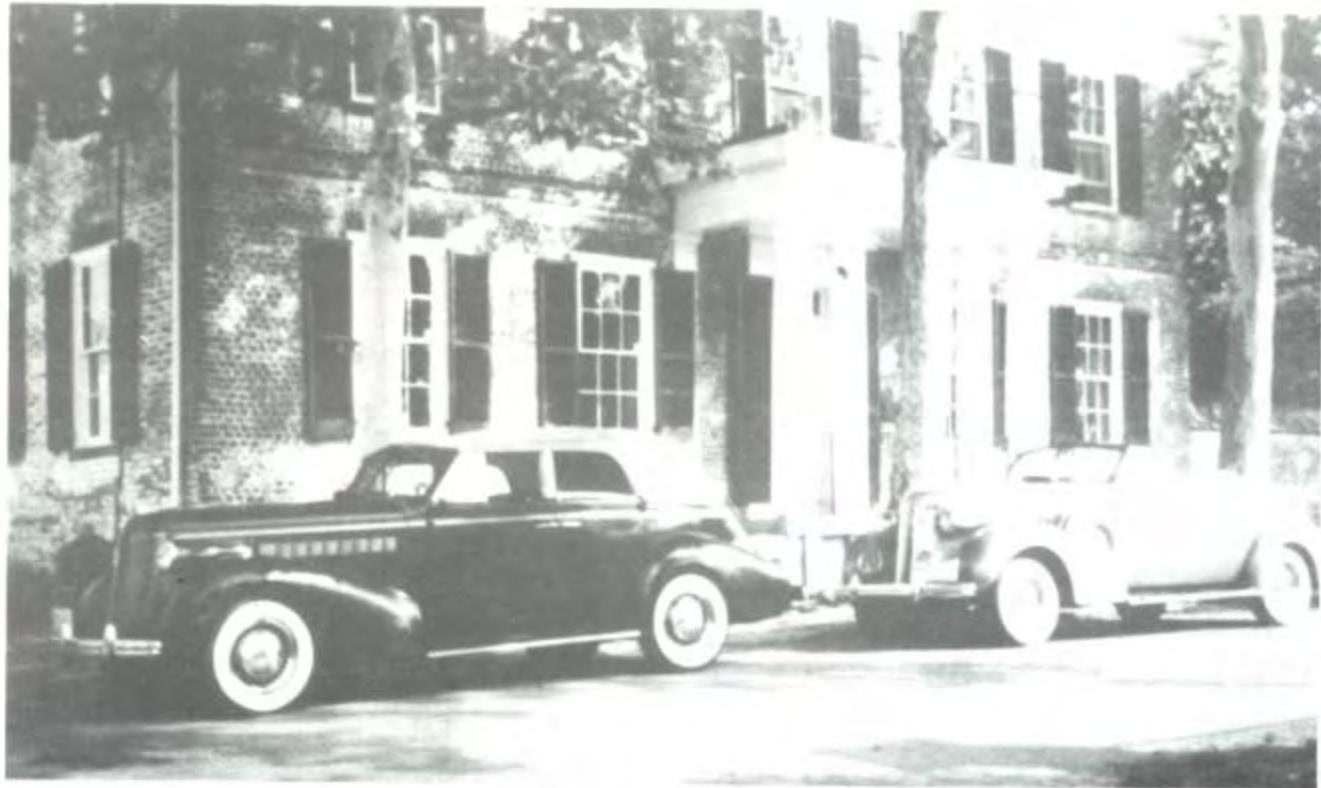




Interior views of Charles Jekofsky's 1938 Century show "chevron" dash panel and maroon steering wheel.







Photos taken on BCA Metro Chapter tours show Andy Diem's (#852) 1937 40-C and Ben Berman's (#579) 1937 46-C in front of a classic 1735 Georgian mansion, now the home of a college president, and the 40-C at the old Baltimore & Ohio station (ca. 1890) in Point of Rocks, Maryland, still in use as a commuter station.



The Herd of Turtles

By Irvin Heckert (#940)

Since I'm a relatively new member and not very knowledgeable about different models, features and the like, and mechanically inept to boot, all I can contribute is a little history about my own 1937 Special.

In the late 1950s, with two small children and a mortgage on a whippoorwill farm, I was in dire need of a cheap auto for basic transportaiton. A small repair shop owner, who had been nursing my various junkers to their inevitable deaths, offered me an old car that I didn't even want to look at. This car had been owned, and bought new, by a local building supply owner. Well, I was desperate, so I looked, and paid the princely sum of \$50 for a 1937 Buick, plus \$25 to replace the wiring in the steering column so the horn would work. I must admit the car was in pretty good condition for its age, but very high mileage and more than a little tired.

As the Buick didn't have jackrabbit starting capabilities, the children promptly named it "The Herd of Turtles," a phrase that I seem to remember was popular at the time. Living on a dirt road led to a lot of flat tires, and almost every time the tire would be broken. I finally decided that inexpensive tires were costing me too much money, and put on 6-ply tires all around. They're still on the car.

A year or so later, the last steam-powered excursion train came through town, and I wanted the children to see a steamer. While we were enjoying the sights and sounds of bygone days, I noticed that the passengers on the train were doing the same thing, but they were looking at and commenting on our car! That may have been the event that started a certain attachment to the Buick.

On one occasion, we started out to visit a school chum of my wife's, a trip of about 65 miles, with a full tank of gas but no money to spare. We had traveled some 50 miles when the gas gauge showed half-empty, which prompted us to turn for home forthwith. Heading for a state park at the top of a steep mountain road, the Herd of Turtles started overheating on that grade, resulting in a turn-around and heading home again.

In 1960 or '61, the state required turn signals for inspection. Not wanting to add anything that wasn't original, I retired the car. Although the following years of neglect I am too ashamed of to discuss, that attachment I spoke of kept me from sending it to the scrap yard.

At present, it is back in running condition, and I hope to have it back on the road this summer. But my hopes are rather dim, short of winning the lottery, of ever restoring it to its full original glory. It has a map light on the dash, a roll-up blind on the rear window, and a clock that, naturally, no longer runs.

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE: I liked this story, folks, especially the part about the excursion train passengers. Can't you just picture that? I'm not exactly sure what a "whippoorwill farm" is (making no pretense at being a country boy of any kind), but assume it differs significantly from the spreads one sees from the highway in, say, Illinois or Iowa. In any event, I do know that the whippoorwill (so named for its monotonous call) is a night-flying bird that captures insects on the wing, and that Irv Heckert now has a carpet business in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, having presumably given up farming. Let's hope The Herd of Turtles is back in action soon.



TECHNICAL TIPS

TROUBLE-SHOOTING

I. ELECTRICAL

In Issue 3 we considered at some length difficulties one of our members (Ted Masilian, #883) was having with his newly rebuilt engine. In that article, we discussed some apparent voltage regulator trouble, and sluggish acceleration; the latter I suggested might be caused by incorrect valve and/or ignition timing. (see Vol. X, No. 3, pages 20-24.)

Unfortunately, Ted's difficulties have persisted. We will take up his story again.

In the previous article, I suggested that Ted attempt to clean up his voltage regulator, which he did. At that point, he thought he had found his electrical problem.

"After I rebuilt the generator and bench-tested it, it appeared to work perfectly. I put the dust cover band on and didn't realize that the edge of the band was touching the "A" armature terminal of the generator. I found out that with this condition it burned out the armature."

Ted then rebuilt another generator and put it on the car, this time making sure the band was not touching the "A" terminal. "It did not start charging," Ted says, "until I repolarized the voltage regulator." Then it began charging, but again the dash gauge showed it charging "wide open or not at all." Adjusting the spring on the regulator did not change that.

Then, Ted says,

"I left it this way ("wide open") for about a week, approximately 25 miles of driving. Pretty soon I detected a smell and noticed it was not charging again. I removed the dust cover band and found melted solder sprayed on the inside. At that point the generator showed no charge. Now I have two generators with burned out armatures. What I can't understand is that before I dismantled the car for restoration, everything seemed to work fine."

Well, folks, what is Ted's problem? Before addressing that more specifically, let me say this. Several years ago, I proposed what I called Olson's First Law, or the Principle of Harmonious Decrepitude. This holds that in an unrestored car which runs decently, even though many or all of its various components are in an advanced state of wear or decay, a sort of equilibrium, or "harmonious decrepitude," has been achieved. If you fix, monkey with, restore, replace, fiddle around with, or otherwise alter part of one of these systems of equilibrium, some other part is very likely to fail, even though it worked OK before. I suggested this Principle partly in jest, but only partly: I have seen it happen enough times to believe in it. (An example of this involving certain parts of the human body may be postulated, and I leave this to your imaginations.) What the car did before it was taken apart is at best only slightly relevant to what it does now.

In my opinion, the first area of investigation in any electrical problem — at least in cars with generator-voltage regulator systems — should be the battery, and its connections to the car's electrical system. If these are faulty, the system will not perform well. Make sure the battery is fully charged, and has no bad cells. If it is more than two, or at the most three years old, replace it. Do not assume that because batteries in modern cars last four or five years, batteries in antique cars will do the same. They won't. Connect the positive terminal of the battery to the starter with the thickest cable you can find — the best is 00 ("double-ought"), which you may need to have made up by a welding shop. Make sure your battery ground is in good condition and connected to bare metal on the frame. Likewise your starter ground. Don't use the thin-gauge cables found on modern cars.

While we are on the subject of cables, make sure your spark plug wires have the old-style heavy-duty copper cores. Modern carbon-fiber or "Aramid" or other synthetic material plug wires, designed for systems with plug gaps of .060 or more, have too much resistance and will not work.

Now, let us assume the battery, cables and grounds are all in good condition, and the battery is well-charged. If under these conditions you see a continuous high rate of charge on your dash gauge, then either

- (1) the voltage regulator is faulty; or
- (2) there is a bad short to ground somewhere in the wiring.

Either of these conditions will cause armatures, coils, and breaker points to burn out. The MOTOR Auto Repair Manual, Vintage Car Edition, suggests the following test:

"Run the engine at about 20 MPH. Remove the wire from the regulator field terminal. If the charging rate now drops to zero, the regulator is at fault. If the high charging rate continues with the wire removed from the field terminal of the regulator, the generator is faulty or there is a grounded wire in the wiring harness."

I believe Ted's trouble is either one or both of the two conditions mentioned above. The fact that he may have shorted an armature terminal on the generator's dust cover is by the way. The armature would have burned out anyway.

It is possible to run a series of tests on voltage regulators, and these are detailed in the MOTOR Manual. I will not go through them here, primarily because even if one finds the trouble, it is difficult or impossible to find someone who knows how to repair them or has the necessary parts. As indicated in the Issue 3 article, in my opinion the best cure for a regulator that is faulty, or suspected of being faulty, is to install the VR-6 electronic unit manufactured and sold by RBR Electronics. (I have no financial stake in these devices; I only know they work.) That will be cheaper and better in the end than trying to fix an "original" regulator, especially if you're not really sure what you're doing.

If I were Ted, I would:

- (1) Carefully and methodically go over all the car's wiring with a wiring diagram in hand, looking for possible shorts, and putting aside all assumptions and memories concerning the manner in which I had re-wired the car when I put it together. If I found any faults, I would, obviously, correct them.

- (2) Buy myself a new battery, charge it if necessary, and put it in the car, making sure all cables and grounds were adequate.
- (3) Rebuild one of my generators, test it for proper function, and put it in the car.
- (4) Try things out, and if the high rate of charge condition persisted, replace the regulator, before, needless to say, it burned out another armature.

II. SLUGGISH ACCELERATION

Ted's other problem, discussed also in Issue 3, is sluggish acceleration. In that article, I suggested incorrect valve or ignition timing or faulty vacuum or centrifugal advance mechanisms. Ted says he was careful, when rebuilding his engine, to get the timing chain on correctly, and that his distributor appears to be in good condition with both spark advance systems working correctly. So let us assume the problem has another cause. Before tackling this, I would cure the electrical problem discussed above. It may very well be that, after that problem is solved, the car will run much better. Incorrect voltage in the electric system will inevitably affect performance. If the car did not run better, I might replace the coil (which could have been damaged by the electrical fault) and make sure my plug wires were the correct style and in good condition.

After that, I might try a series of vacuum gauge tests. In today's era of electronic test equipment, the vacuum gauge has sort of been forgotten, but it is amazing what this device, in the hands of an experienced user, can tell us about older engines. I have included in this issue an article, first printed about five years ago, that contains detailed instructions. A few points made therein are worth re-emphasizing: (1) connect the gauge to a source of manifold vacuum, not to the spark advance connection on the carburetor; (2) if your car has a "double-action" fuel pump — i.e. one with a vacuum booster for the windshield wipers — disconnect the booster.

If the vacuum gauge tests did not reveal any trouble, I would look at (1) excessively rich or lean mixture; (2) clogged or restricted fuel line or air cleaner; (3) incorrect carburetor jets or accelerator pump malfunction; (4) bad fuel pump; (5) dragging brakes; (6) slipping clutch. However, I have an idea that the trouble will be found before any of these areas of investigation will need to be undertaken.

In the foregoing discussion, I made certain assumptions because, not having the car in front of me, I had no alternative. However, let me conclude this discourse by repeating what I have said several times before: assumptions can be dangerous. Many times I have seen even the experienced mechanic or restorer get lost in the swamp of assumptions: "it can't be that"; "I fixed that last year"; "nah, they never go bad"; "Uncle Louie had a car like this, and" Set up a plan when trouble-shooting; pursue it methodically; begin with simple causes and proceed to the more complex or unusual; test your assumptions: they may turn out to be incorrect.

MORE ON RUNNINGBOARD WORK

By Greg Marshall (#148)

I just got done with the article in the current Torque Tube on runningboard restoration, and I thought I'd share some information. My '37 Model 66S Coupe is a street rod, but I still recovered the runningboards. I didn't think the car looked complete without them. Besides it makes my already low car look lower still. Obviously the

material I covered the boards with is not authentic, but it worked nicely, and enough to cover both boards plus glue only came to about \$140.00. I contacted an industrial rubber supplier locally and told them what I was doing. I wanted oil and water resistant rubber with ribs on one side. What they figured would be good was about 1/4 inch thick, and had various rib patterns. I chose a very fine rib pattern with ribs about 1/8 inch wide separated by about 1/8 inch, lengthwise on the board. To prepare the boards, I scraped the old rubber off using a gasket scraper tool and a hammer. It was a tedious job and messy too, but it got the boards very clean. I then went over them with a wire brush in a drill to get the metal really clean. I also ran into the problem of the boards being slightly short like yours were, but I think this was a case of a century with special boards or something. To fix this, I fitted the boards on the car and added sheet metal extensions on both ends to bring the ends to within 1/4 inch of the fenders. I then fit the rubber covers to extend just slightly over the sheet metal extensions. To glue the rubber to the boards, I used 3M brand spray-on adhesive for vinyl tops. I started on the inside part of the board, gluing down past where the board curves into the horizontal area. I clamped the rubber in place for 24 hours. Then I glued and clamped the horizontal area. Finally I glued about half of the outside curve, with the remainder secured with the trim strip. One word of caution; when stripping the old rubber off, I discovered several small indentations in the metal which I filled with fiberglass resin to create a smooth surface to bond the new rubber onto. These indentations were used originally to help position the rubber on the board before vulcanizing, I would think. If you don't fill the indentations, you may end up with dips in the rubber. Also put the boards on the car and make sure they aren't bent and the brackets aren't bent or twisted. After this fitting, and only after this fitting, should you start any finish work. Hope this information will help somebody else.

DO-IT-YOURSELF UPHOLSTERY

Bill Mack (#839) who happens to be a police captain in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, may have missed his real calling. He decided that before putting out some serious money for one of the excellent Hampton Coach interior kits, he'd try a do-it-yourself job, and purchased some taupe bedford cord fabric from one of the upholstery material suppliers, along with a second-hand White sewing machine. Bill's '38 now has a new front seat. "All work was done on the kitchen table," he says, "with the equipment moved to a spare bedroom between efforts. The pattern was cut from the old material. Batting and other items needed were purchased locally. About 20 hours of work was involved, and I learned as I went along, as I had never sewed before. The result is very credible and a vast improvement over what remained of the original."

Good show! The problem with undertaking this sort of project of course, is once you have begun by taking the original seat fabric off, you have no choice but to finish, and hope you end up with a half-way decent result. And, if you succeed with one seat, the other one will suddenly look much worse than it did before, and you'll need to do it, after which the door panels and pillars will need work, and then comes the headliner, which is perhaps the most difficult auto interior piece to do.

Without wishing in the least to demean Bill Mack's accomplishment and the fortitude required to undertake it, I will take this opportunity to say once more that if you need a new interior, but don't feel you want to tackle a do-it-yourself-from-scratch project, the Hampton Coach kits are an excellent alternative to a custom upholstery shop job. If you have one of the models for which a kit is available, and can operate a staple gun and a pair of pliers, you can put a hell of a nice new interior into your car for perhaps one-third the cost of a custom job. The instructions are excellent, and all the tricky work has been done for you.

Using a Vacuum Gauge

I discovered the following article in a 1940's MOTOR Auto Repair Manual (Copyright owner of the manual - The Hearst Corporation). It does not appear in the current "Vintage Car Edition." With so many kinds of modern test devices in use today, I had almost forgotten about the old vacuum gauge. And I had never realized all the things it could do. Vacuum gauges are not expensive, and those of us having cars with manifold-operated wipers will find an easy place to hook one up.

I have not done all of the tests outlined in the article, and cannot vouch for their accuracy or for the correctness of all the diagnoses set forth. Like any testing device or technique, the gauge should be used in conjunction with other devices or techniques, and with the judgment and experience of the tester. Moreover, it should be observed that some of the tests must be done in correct sequence to avoid possibly misleading results. At the least, however, I thought the article would be fun to read, and the tests fun to do, for those of you who are not familiar with them. Needless to say, an accurate gauge is the first prerequisite. Happy testing!

USE OF VACUUM GAUGE

Testing engines for various faults with a vacuum gauge is basically determining whether the engine is functioning at its higher R.P.M. at a fixed throttle position. The reason for this is that the highest steady vacuum reading will be obtained at the highest engine R.P.M. at any fixed throttle position. Any condition in the engine, such as incorrect ignition timing, improper valve action, carburetor out of adjustment, air leaks in the intake manifold, etc., are immediately shown by an erratic vacuum reading.

Inasmuch as the vacuum readings depend upon engine speed, a tachometer (R.P.M. indicator) may be used in conjunction with the vacuum gauge to show engine R.P.M. while making the tests.

All vacuum gauges indicate the difference between the pressure inside the intake manifold and the atmospheric pressure outside of the manifold. Consequently, normal vacuum readings will decrease above sea level because atmospheric pressure decreases above sea level. Because of this, the altitude above sea level must be taken into consideration when making tests. Generally speaking, the vacuum will read one inch lower for each 1,000 feet above sea level. The following table gives the approximate readings, in inches of vacuum, that should be obtained in a well tuned engine at sea level and above.

Sea level to 1,000 ft.....	18 to 22
1,000 to 2,000 ft.....	17 to 21
2,000 to 3,000 ft.....	16 to 20
3,000 to 4,000 ft.....	15 to 19
4,000 to 5,000 ft.....	14 to 18
5,000 to 6,000 ft.....	13 to 17

It must be remembered that any variation in atmospheric conditions will cause a change in the above readings, just as a barometer will rise and fall in line with weather conditions. When using a vacuum gauge, the most important thing to watch is the action of the gauge rather than obtaining an actual or theoretical reading. If the operator is inexperienced in interpreting the indications of such an instrument, it is advisable to experiment on an engine by actually creating faulty conditions and then noting their effect on the vacuum gauge.

TEST PROCEDURE—Warm up the engine to normal operating temperature. Attach the hose of the vacuum gauge to the intake manifold fitting. If this fitting is not conveniently located, the hose may be attached to the windshield wiper connection. However, care must be exercised to see that there are no leaks between the manifold and the connecting point.

If the engine is equipped with a combination fuel and vacuum pump, it is necessary to disconnect the vacuum booster in order to obtain an accurate reading of any engine discrepancies.

Run the engine at idle speed. If the indicator hand springs back and forth without apparently indicating any one condition, it indicates there is more than one trouble to be corrected and the gauge is attempting to show all the troubles at one time.

In the illustrations, the dark needle indicates a steady hand, while the light needles indicate the hand fluctuating between the positions shown. The data given below are the result of experiments made by the Ted Nagle Equipment Corp.



Fig. 12 An engine in good condition should indicate 18 to 22 inches of vacuum at sea level with engine idling

NORMAL ENGINE—Fig. 12. At idling speed, the gauge should read the approximate number of inches as shown in the table above for a specific altitude. Generally speaking, the newer high compression engines should read at about the upper limits, while the older models should read at the lower limits. Thus, an engine in good condition should indicate 18 to 22 inches at sea level, with the pointer steady.

When the throttle is opened and quickly closed, the pointer will drop to 4 to 6 inches (open throttle vacuum) and rise without pulsation to the normal reading.

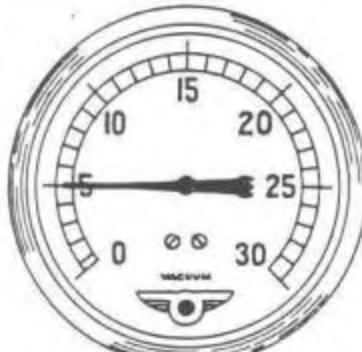


Fig. 13 Vacuum reading with ignition off and starting motor in operation. A reading of less than 5 indicates leakage from exhaust manifold to intake manifold

LEAKAGE FROM EXHAUST TO INTAKE MANIFOLD—Fig. 13. This test is made with the engine hot but not running. If the car is equipped with an automatic starting device, disconnect the necessary wires so the unit is inoperative. Also on models equipped with an automatic electric choke operated by the starting switch, it will be necessary to disconnect it to prevent it from operating when making the test. The carburetor throttle is to be completely closed by turning back the throttle screw.

Crank the engine with the starter and if the gauge shows about 5 inches of vacuum, there is no leakage. If it indicates about 3, leakage is present. If leakage is indicated, repairs should be made before attempting any further tests, as this condition would cause subsequent tests to be misleading.

Be sure the battery is fully charged in order to have sufficient speed of the starting motor.



Fig. 14 If needle fluctuates below normal with engine idling it indicates air leak in intake manifold or gasket, or carburetor gasket

INTAKE AIR LEAKS—Fig. 14. Tests should be made with the engine running at proper idling speed. If there are any leaks in the intake system, such as leaky intake manifold gaskets, windshield wiper or tubing, manifold to carburetor gasket, vacuum starting switch, vacuum brakes, vacuum transmission control, or vacuum clutch, they will be indicated immediately on the gauge. The pointer will drop from 3 to 8 inches below normal and will remain quite steady, but will have a tendency to drop lower, depending upon the speed of the engine and the increase in leakage due to heat expansion.



Fig. 15 Vacuum readings with open and closed throttle to detect exhaust back pressure

EXHAUST BACK PRESSURE—Fig. 15. The purpose of this test is to determine whether or not there is any restriction or clogged condition in the exhaust system which would cause a back pressure in the manifold. The test is made by slowly opening the throttle until approximately 2,000 R.P.M. is reached. Close the throttle quickly. If there is no excessive back pressure, the pointer will return to normal reading quickly. If the gauge registers 5 inches or more above the normal reading and seems to stop momentarily in its return to a normal reading, the exhaust system is partially restricted.

When such a condition is found, it is necessary to check all those units which might cause the trouble. These include (1) damaged exhaust pipe, (2) heat control valve partially or wholly closed, (3) heat control valve shaft frozen, (4) exhaust system clogged due to incorrect installation of exhaust pipe heater, (5) clogged muffler.



Fig. 16 Indication of cylinder head gasket leakage — engine idling

CYLINDER HEAD GASKET LEAKAGE—Fig. 16. If the cylinder head gasket is leaking, the pointer will drop sharply from the normal or maximum reading to a reading of approximately 10 inches or less with engine idling. If the gasket is blown between two adjacent cylinders, the drop will be much greater.

A more positive way of testing for such a condition is by making a compression test with a compression gauge as the compression readings will be identical for the two adjacent cylinders between which the head gasket is leaking.

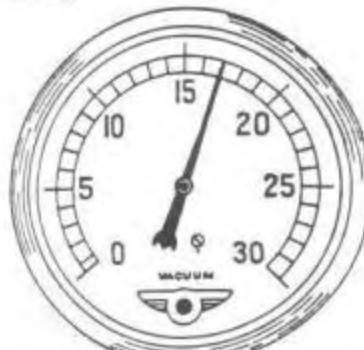


Fig. 17 With engine idling, the above reading indicates either late ignition timing or valve lash set too close. A reading above normal indicates early ignition timing

IGNITION TIMING—Fig. 17. If the pointer remains at 2 or 3 inches below normal and is practically stationary, it indicates late ignition timing. If the gauge reads above the normal reading, it indicates that the ignition timing is too early.



Fig. 17 An intermittent drop below normal indicates valve leakage

VALVE LEAKAGE—Fig. 18. If the valves are leaking, the pointer will drop one or more inches from the normal maximum reading. If only one valve is leaking the drop will occur at regular intervals whenever the one particular valve is attempting to close. If more than one valve is leaking, the action will be more frequent, depending upon the number of valves which are not seating properly.

VALVE LASH—If all of the valve tappets are evenly adjusted, but are set to close, the readings will be below normal but will remain steady (see Fig. 17). If valve tappet clearances are not uniform a reading similar to the one for leaking valves, Fig. 18, will be obtained. It is always advisable to have the vacuum gauge connected to the engine when adjusting valve lash.



Fig. 18 Rapid intermittent dropping from normal reading indicates sticking valves

STICKING VALVES—Fig. 19. A sticking valve will be indicated by a rapid intermittent dropping from the maximum normal reading. Such a condition is readily distinguished from a leaking valve inasmuch as the drop of the pointer will occur with even regularity but only when the faulty valve or valve stick. Such a condition can be definitely proven if the application of a small quantity of penetrating oil remedies the condition.



Fig. 19 Rapid intermittent dropping from normal reading indicates sticking valves

A reading of less than 5 inches above the normal idle reading indicates a loss in compression and the engine should be given a compression test before condemning the rings.



WEAK OR BROKEN VALVE SPRINGS—Fig. 20. Weak valve springs can be determined by running the engine at steadily increasing speeds up to approximately 2,000 R.P.M. If the pointer fluctuates rapidly between 12 and 24 inches and the fluctuations increase in speed as the engine R.P.M. is increased, weak valve springs are indicated.

If a valve spring is broken, the pointer will fluctuate rapidly every time the valve attempts to close.



Fig. 21 With engine idling, fluctuations between 5 and 10 inches indicate late valve timing

LATE VALVE TIMING—Fig. 21. If the valve timing is late the pointer will fluctuate between 5 and 10 inches.

However, if the valve timing is only slightly late, the reading at idling speed will probably be normal. Late valve timing is also indicated by the engine overheating or by its laboring.

PISTON RING TEST—Fig. 22. Before making this test, it is essential that the engine shall have given normal readings on all previous tests. Also, it is imperative that the oil in the crankcase be in good condition, as poor or diluted oil will be indicated as a loss of compression when such is not actually the case.

To test for improper fitted, defective or leaking piston rings, the engine should be run at idling speed. Then open the throttle quickly to the full open position, allowing the engine to pick up speed to about 2,000 R.P.M. Close the throttle quickly. If the pointer jumps immediately to 5 or more inches above the normal vacuum at idle, the rings are in good condition.

Fig. 22 With open and closed throttle, if vacuum temporarily goes above normal as engine speed falls to idle, compression is good



Fig. 22 With open and closed throttle, if vacuum temporarily goes above normal as engine speed falls to idle, compression is good

GENERAL IGNITION TESTS—Fig. 23. Defective spark plugs or improperly spaced plug gaps, burned or improperly spaced or synchronized distributor contact points, or any leak in the ignition system caused by high tension cables, distributor cap or weak ignition coil, will be indicated by excessive vibration of the pointer at about 1 inch above or below the normal reading.

CARBURETOR IDLE ADJUSTMENT—Fig. 23. A slow movement of the pointer at idle speed at normal vacuum reading may be due to incorrect idle adjustment of the carburetor. The carburetor idle adjustment should be made to give the most steady reading of the vacuum gauge.





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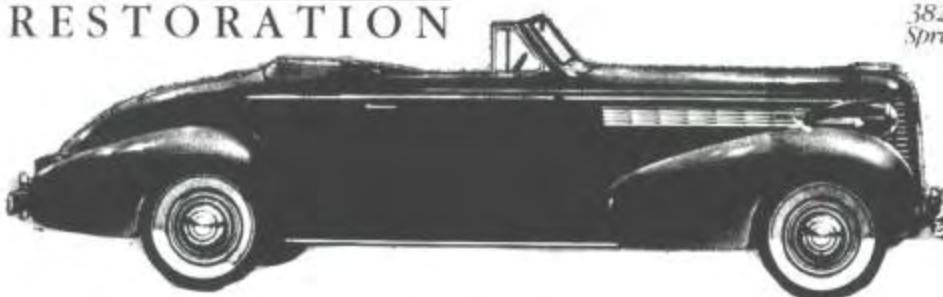
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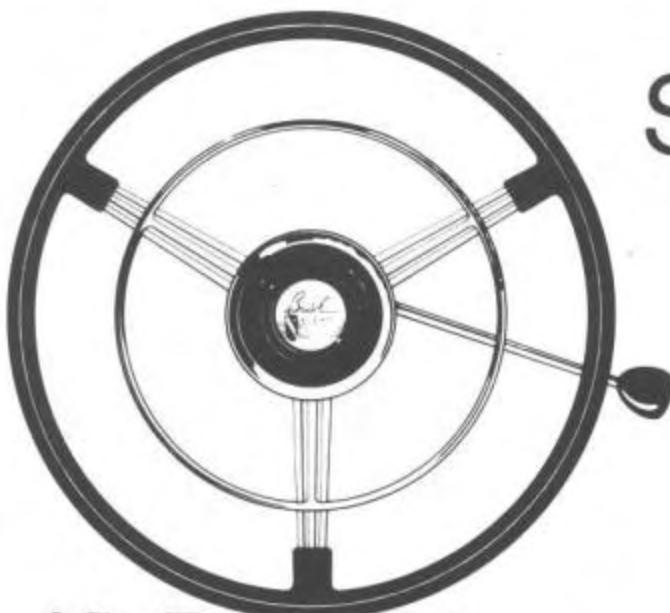


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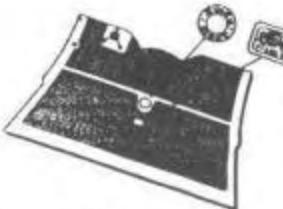
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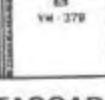
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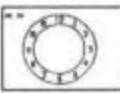
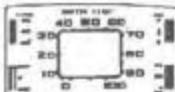
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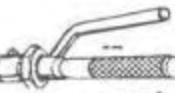
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